

# Brief History of Charter Review and Process



THE CITY OF  
**COLUMBUS**  
CHARTER REVIEW  
COMMISSION

# Overview

- The Columbus City Charter is the equivalent of the Constitution for the City, setting the framework for all laws, adopted by the electors of Columbus in 1914.
- The Charter has been amended 55 times in its 108-year history
- Commissions, or committees, have been seated recently in 1998, 1999, 2014, and 2016
  - 1998, 1999 commissions were ad hoc
  - 2014 was comprehensive and established a permanent review commission in Charter
  - 2016 committee was seated in response to resident input on Council

# 1998 Commission

- Seven ballot issues:
  - To make the entire Charter gender neutral \*\*
  - Amend Sec. 8 establishing the day and time of Council's first meeting (changes from 8pm to 5pm)
  - Amend Sec 27 regarding the appropriation ordinance. Shortens the time between Mayor's recommendation and Council action.
  - Amend Sec 67, and repeal Sec 77, to clarify the City Attorney's responsibilities and to eliminate conflict with the Ohio Revised Code.

# 1998 Commission cont'd

- Amend Sec 112-1 through 129 regarding the Departments of Public Safety, Public Service, Recreation and Parks Commission, and Health and Sanitation - retitled, reorganized, and renumbered to make them easier to read.
- Amend Sec 148-1 regarding the number of unclassified positions. Allows for a number of policy making and fiduciary positions to be unclassified.
- Amend Sec 202 relating to nomination petitions. The number of signatures needed on a petition is changed from a fixed percentage of those who voted at the last election to 1,000 for all elected municipal officials, and the requirement of a notary is eliminated.

# 1999 Commission

- Reconstituted the 1998 Commission to consider the issue of the terms of Police and Fire Chief in the City
- Established the 5-year terms of appointment for the Chiefs by the Mayor
- Previously, Police Chief had been a lifetime tenure.

# 2014 Commission

- Three ballot issues, organized by subject
  - Issue 6: City Administration
    - Protecting the rights of all Columbus residents to access city services and employment without discrimination
    - Requiring Recreation and Parks Commission members to be residents of Columbus
    - Establishing a citizens' commission to review the city charter every 10 years.
    - Making city budget and annual reports permanent electronic records.

# 2014 Commission cont'd

## – Issue 7: City Elections

- Following best practices in state election law, while maintaining nonpartisan city elections.
- Allowing the city to regulate campaign finance and disclosure for political candidates and local ballot issues.
- Lowered threshold to recall elected officials and reforming petition processes for transparency

## – Issue 8: City Officeholders

- Introducing ethics requirements, while requiring a stiffer city penalty – loss of office or employment – for violations.
- Established elected officials compensation commission – limiting salary changes to their recommendations.
- Open access to the city's records and meetings of public bodies and advisory bodies – requiring permanent electronic record

# 2016 Committee

- Seated in response to resident input regarding Council governance.
- Previous Charter amendment on the ballot had failed in a 2016 special election, but stimulated interest in the best practices for makeup of City Council and how members are elected/appointed

# 2016 Committee

- Resulted in one ballot issue:
  - Increasing the size of Council from seven to nine members
  - Established at-large district representation
  - Established a decennial commission to draw districts for the City based on previous census

# Process

- Columbus City Charter Section 236:
- A charter review commission, composed of five qualified electors of the city, shall be appointed at the second regular meeting of council in the year 2022 and of each succeeding tenth year thereafter, and at any time council may, by vote of eight of its members, call for such a commission. The charter review commission shall consist of two members appointed by the council, two members appointed by the mayor, and one member jointly appointed by the president of council and the mayor, such member serving as chair of the commission. Members of the commission shall not hold any other office or employment in the government of the city, and shall serve without compensation...

# Process

- Columbus City Charter Section 236:
- ...Vacancies shall be filled in the same manner as prescribed for the original appointment. The commission shall be considered a public body. Within six months after appointment, the commission shall report its findings and recommendations regarding the charter, if any, to council. Council may at its discretion submit, in whole or in part, any of the proposed amendments to a vote of the people in the manner provided for by this charter. Any such amendment shall be in a form as provided by council. Nothing in this section shall limit the authority of council to submit any proposed charter amendment to a vote of the people as otherwise provided for in this charter.

# Process

- Commission was seated at January 10 Council meeting
- Organizational meeting held January 28
- February-July: Commission meets to discuss potential Charter amendments

# Process

- Commission's recommendations, if any, due to Council on July 10 (Sunday, so July 8 may be a better date)
- Recommendations from past Commissions have come in the form of a report, varying in length from six to 236 pages.

# Process

- If Council chooses to accept all, some, or any of the recommendations of the Commission, they must be placed by ordinance on Council's July 25 meeting in order to make the November ballot, notwithstanding a special meeting called by Council during recess.
- General Election is November 8, 2022

# Questions or Comments?

# Thank you!

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